THE POSITION OF OMITTOISM IN THE WORKS OF 10 CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHERS

A Comparative Analytical Study Engaging Stephen Law, A. John Simmons, Christine Korsgaard, Michael Huemer, Elizabeth Anderson, James P. Sterba, Erik Wielenberg, Mark C. Murphy, Wes Morriston, and Graham Oppy

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Abstract

This article situates Omittoism—the philosophical framework of jurisdictional sovereignty—within the landscape of contemporary analytic philosophy by mapping its arguments against ten major philosophers whose work engages the foundations of divine authority, political obligation, moral grounding, and the conditions for legitimate governance. Omittoism holds that the question of divine legitimacy is analytically separable from the question of divine existence, and that creation does not entail authority: rational agents retain jurisdictional sovereignty over their moral lives absent demonstrable consent-based legitimacy. This article demonstrates that Omittoism's central theses stand in convergent, divergent, and dialectically productive relationships with the work of Stephen Law, A. John Simmons, Christine Korsgaard, Michael Huemer, Elizabeth Anderson, James P. Sterba, Erik Wielenberg, Mark C. Murphy, Wes Morriston, and Graham Oppy. The comparative analysis reveals that Omittoism operates at a productive intersection of political philosophy, moral theory, and philosophy of religion—an intersection that these thinkers approach from distinct but overlapping angles. The article argues that Omittoism's distinctive contribution is the formalization of a third axis in philosophy of religion: not the ontological axis (Does God exist?) nor the theodicial axis (Is God good?), but the jurisdictional axis (Does any entity, regardless of existence or goodness, possess legitimate authority over rational agents without their consent?).

Keywords: *divine authority, jurisdictional sovereignty, political obligation, consent theory, moral realism, political philosophy, philosophy of religion, Omittoism*

Introduction: Mapping a New Philosophical Axis

The landscape of contemporary philosophy of religion has been shaped by two master questions. The first is ontological: Does God exist? This question organizes debates ranging from cosmological and ontological arguments to arguments from evil, divine hiddenness, and religious experience. The second is theodicial: If God exists, is God good? This question organizes debates about natural and moral evil, the compatibility of omnipotence with creaturely freedom, and the coherence of theological doctrines of justice. These two questions have proved extraordinarily generative, producing the philosophical careers and major works of the ten thinkers examined in this article.

Omittoism, the framework of jurisdictional sovereignty, introduces a third question that is logically prior to both: By what right would any entity—proven or unproven, good or indifferent—possess legislative authority over the moral lives of rational agents? This is neither an ontological question (it remains agnostic about existence) nor a theodicial question (it brackets the goodness assessment). It is a question of political philosophy applied systematically and without exception to the domain of divine command. Omittoism terms the principled refusal to grant such authority—absent demonstrable consent, accountability, and the possibility of exit—Jurisdictional Sovereignty. The systematic withdrawal of divine legislative power is called Jurisdictional Severance. The evaluative procedure that applies standards of legitimate governance to any claimed divine authority is called the Cosmic Audit.

What makes a comparative analysis of Omittoism and these ten philosophers philosophically valuable is not merely that they share subject matter. It is that each philosopher, approaching the territory from a distinct disciplinary angle—Law from philosophy of religion and critical thinking, Simmons from political philosophy, Korsgaard from moral psychology and Kantian constructivism, Huemer from moral intuitionism and philosophical anarchism, Anderson from relational egalitarianism, Sterba from logical analysis of the problem of evil, Wielenberg from non-theistic moral realism, Murphy from theistic natural law, and Morriston from critical analysis of theological ethics—provides conceptual resources that illuminate, challenge, support, or sharpen Omittoism's theses in distinct ways.

The article proceeds through ten chapters, one for each philosopher. Each chapter: (1) identifies the core relevant theses in the philosopher's work; (2) maps the convergences with Omittoism; (3) examines the divergences or tensions; and (4) identifies what Omittoism adds to or receives from the philosopher's framework. The concluding section synthesizes the comparative analysis and argues that Omittoism occupies a philosophically distinctive position that cannot be reduced to any of its intellectual neighbors, while being genuinely enriched by engagement with all of them.

A methodological note on originality is warranted before proceeding. The comparative analysis that follows will demonstrate extensive convergences between Omittoism and each of the ten philosophers examined. These convergences are philosophically significant, but they do not constitute evidence of derivation. When independent thinkers working on adjacent problems reach structurally similar conclusions, the appropriate inference is that the shared conclusions are tracking something real — not that one thinker plagiarized another.

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Chapter I: Stephen Law and the Symmetry of Epistemic Accountability

1.1 Law's Central Arguments

Stephen Law is perhaps best known in philosophy of religion for the "Evil God Challenge," developed across several publications and most accessibly in his 2010 paper of that name in Religious Studies. The challenge is deceptively simple in its form but devastating in its implications. Law observes that if we are willing to accept that various features of the world constitute evidence against the existence of an evil god—a god who is omnipotent, omniscient, and maximally malevolent—then we must explain why the very same features of the world do not constitute equally powerful evidence against the existence of a good god. The distribution of suffering and flourishing in the world, Law argues, is roughly what we would expect from a god who was neither good nor evil, or from no god at all. The theodical moves available to the defender of a good god (greater goods, soul-making, free will) have exact structural parallels

available to the defender of an evil god (greater evils, soul-destroying, free will deployed to produce maximum harm). If these moves restore the probability of a good god despite the evidence, they must restore the probability of an evil god equally. But we confidently reject the evil god hypothesis. Law's challenge is to explain why symmetrical confidence is not warranted with respect to the good god hypothesis.

Law's broader intellectual project, visible in works such as Believing Bullshit (2011) and The War for Children's Minds (2006), concerns epistemic autonomy and the social conditions under which rational inquiry can be protected from authoritarian imposition. In Believing Bullshit, Law identifies a repertoire of intellectual moves—appeals to mystery, accusations of arrogance, circular reasoning disguised as depth—that function to insulate beliefs from rational scrutiny. In The War for Children's Minds, he argues that a liberal educational philosophy committed to autonomous rational inquiry is to be preferred over what he calls the "authoritarian" approach, which transmits a fixed worldview and discourages critical examination of its foundations.

1.2 Convergences with Omittoism

The convergences between Law's philosophy and Omittoism are substantial and operate at multiple levels. Most immediately, Law's Evil God Challenge maps with striking precision onto Omittoism's Foreknowledge Liability Clause and the broader structure of the Cosmic Audit. The Cosmic Audit applies the same evaluative standards to divine authority that one would apply to any other claimant to authority: legislative clarity, proportional justice, and engineering competence. When the audit is conducted, the world fails all three criteria. Law's Evil God Challenge operates within the same logical framework: if the world's evidence profile is adequate to convict an evil god of malevolence, it is adequate to raise equivalent doubts about a good god's engineering record. Both Law and Omittoism insist that the assessment of God's governance must proceed by the same evidential and moral standards applied to any other governance.

Law's treatment of what he calls "Going Nuclear" in Believing Bullshit—the move of appealing to mystery, transcendence, or ineffability as an all-purpose defense against critique—directly parallels Omittoism's response to the Mysterian Objection (skeptical theism).

Both recognize the same logical structure: if human cognitive faculties are too limited to evaluate divine governance, they are equally too limited to justify worship on grounds of divine goodness. The appeal to mystery is self-defeating as a defense of divine authority, because it undermines the very evaluative framework that could generate the judgment that God is worshipworthy. As Omittoism formulates it: "An authority that relies on hidden data to justify its edicts is not exercising moral authority; it is exercising obscure power." Law's critique of appeals to mystery reaches the same conclusion through the lens of epistemic hygiene.

Law's commitment to epistemic autonomy in education connects to Omittoism's Public Reason Principle—the requirement that legislative justifications be epistemically accessible to all citizens regardless of their theological commitments. Both positions resist the imposition of worldviews through authority rather than argument. Law's "liberal" educational philosophy, which insists that children be given the tools to evaluate beliefs for themselves rather than simply inherit them, is a domain-specific application of the same principle that Omittoism applies to political and divine authority: that legitimate intellectual and moral governance must be transparent to the governed, not merely asserted.

1.3 Divergences and What Omittoism Adds

The most significant divergence between Law and Omittoism is one of scope and structural design. Law's Evil God Challenge operates within the ontological paradigm: it is a challenge to the existence of a good god, aiming to establish evidential parity between theism and atheism (or to show that the evidence actually favors atheism). The challenge assumes that the central question is whether God exists and whether God's existence is epistemically warranted. Omittoism explicitly steps outside this paradigm, bracketing the existence question and redirecting attention to the legitimacy question. This is not merely a terminological difference; it represents a fundamental methodological shift.

The practical import of the shift is significant. Law's challenge can be rebutted—at least in principle—by a sufficiently comprehensive theodicy that shows why the world's evil profile is compatible with perfect goodness. Omittoism's jurisdictional challenge cannot be rebutted by any theodicy, because it does not depend on the world's evil profile. Even if a perfect theodicy were available—even if every instance of suffering were shown to be necessary for a greater

good—Omittoism's Consent Constraint would remain operative: rational agents who did not consent to be enrolled in the soul-making program are not thereby obligated to regard the programmer as their legitimate legislator. The jurisdictional critique survives a perfect theodicy; Law's challenge does not.

Moreover, Omittoism offers something Law's framework does not: a positive account of how moral authority and ethical obligation are generated without divine authorization. Law's project is largely critical—it challenges the epistemic credentials of theistic belief—but it does not develop a systematic alternative moral framework. Omittoism's Axiom of Shared Vulnerability and Bio-Social Contract provide precisely this: a foundation for ethics in the biological and social facts of sentient interdependence that requires no metaphysical premises beyond those already implicit in recognizing that one is a vulnerable being in a world of other vulnerable beings.

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Chapter II: A. John Simmons and the Strict Doctrine of Consent

2.1 Simmons's Political Philosophy

A. John Simmons is the most rigorous and uncompromising consent theorist in contemporary political philosophy. His landmark work Moral Principles and Political Obligations (1979) subjects all major theories of political obligation—natural duty theories, fair play theories, gratitude theories, and tacit consent theories—to systematic critical examination and finds each of them deficient in establishing genuine political obligations for the citizens of most existing states. Simmons's central conclusion is that most people in most states do not have genuine political obligations, not because states are generally unjust, but because the conditions for generating genuine obligations—most fundamentally, the condition of actual voluntary consent—have rarely if ever been satisfied.

Simmons distinguishes between political obligation (the moral duty to comply with a particular state's laws in virtue of a special relationship with that state) and natural duties (moral requirements that apply universally regardless of any special relationship). He argues that natural

duty accounts—most prominently Rawls's account in A Theory of Justice—cannot generate the particularity of political obligation: they can show why one has reasons to support just institutions in general, but not why one has special obligations to this state rather than another. Only genuine consent can generate that particularity.

In On the Edge of Anarchy (1993) and subsequent essays, Simmons develops what he calls "associative anarchism" or "philosophical anarchism": the view that the ideal of legitimate political authority has not been realized in any actual state, that most citizens therefore lack genuine political obligations, and that this does not entail that law is to be disregarded, but rather that compliance is grounded in moral reasons rather than political obligation strictly construed.

2.2 Convergences with Omittoism

The convergence between Simmons and Omittoism is structural and deep. Omittoism's Axiom III—the Consent Constraint—is essentially Simmons's central principle extended to the cosmic domain: "Legitimate authority over rational agents requires either explicit consent or the meaningful possibility of exit. Where existence is involuntary and exit impossible (absent self-destruction), consent is vitiated by duress." This is the Simmonsian argument transposed from the political to the theological register.

Simmons's critique of tacit consent is particularly germane. He argues that the kind of "consent" typically attributed to citizens of liberal democracies—continuing to reside in the territory, using public services, not actively rebelling—fails to meet the conditions for genuine consent because it lacks the voluntariness and comprehension that genuine consent requires. One cannot meaningfully choose between alternatives when one alternative (relocation to another jurisdiction) is prohibitively costly, and when the very fact of having been born into the jurisdiction was not a matter of choice. Omittoism makes the identical argument about divine authority: continued existence under conditions of cosmic inescapability does not constitute consent to divine governance any more than a kidnapping victim's acceptance of food constitutes endorsement of captivity. The parallel is exact in structure and equally devastating in its implications.

The category mistake objection proves too much: if the ontological gap between God and creature is so absolute that political concepts cannot cross it, then neither can moral concepts,

and the entire apparatus of divine command—obligation, guilt, judgment, punishment—collapses with them, since these are equally political and juridical categories applied across the same gap. The objection, in other words, is not available to any theology that simultaneously claims God issues binding commands and judges creatures for disobeying them, because the moment God judges, God has already treated the creature as a rights-bearing subject capable of moral accountability—which is precisely the ontological status required for consent to be meaningful. The asymmetry between creator and creature does not eliminate the consent requirement; it is the strongest possible argument for it, since the more absolute the power differential, the more urgently legitimacy theory demands that authority be grounded in something other than the power differential itself.

The inference from absent consent to absent legitimate authority requires dialectical securing, since consent is one route to legitimate authority but not, on all political theories, the only route. Murphy's service model illustrates the gap: a physician with superior knowledge of what is good for a patient may possess genuine advisory authority without prior consent. Three conditions, however, distinguish advisory authority from the governing authority that divine command traditions actually claim—advisory authority is domain-specific, revocable by the advisee, and verifiable through outcomes and second opinions—and divine authority as classically described satisfies none of them, making the service model structurally inadequate for the task it is recruited to perform. The stronger and more formally precise claim is that consent in the creator-creature relationship is not merely absent but impossible in principle: genuine consent requires the existence of the consenting party before the agreement, comprehensible presentation of terms before instantiation, a genuine alternative to acceptance, and freedom from coercion—and creation fails all four conditions simultaneously, since the creature cannot pre-consent to existing, receives no terms before being instantiated, and faces a power asymmetry so total that it constitutes structural coercion regardless of whether any explicit threat is issued. This distinguishes the cosmic situation from ordinary cases of unchosen authority—such as being born into a state—where retrospective ratification or emigration remain live possibilities. The retrospective consent response, that God offers opportunities to consent through revelation or religious experience, fails because consenting to conditions already imposed and already experienced does not retroactively legitimize the authority that imposed them; a kidnapper who eventually offers the victim the option of staying voluntarily has not

made the original abduction legitimate. Together, the insufficiency of the service model for this specific authority claim and the principled structural impossibility of prior consent close the inferential gap, making the move from the Consent Constraint to Jurisdictional Sovereignty logically rather than merely rhetorically secure.

Simmons's distinction between authority (the right to rule) and power (the capacity to coerce) is foundational to Omittoism's entire framework. Omittoism's core thesis—that creation does not generate authority, and that power (even cosmic power) does not justify governance absent consent—is the Simmonsian distinction elevated to cosmic scale. The might-makes-right reasoning that Simmons rejects in the political context is precisely what Omittoism rejects in the theological context: the inference from the brute fact of power or creative capacity to the normative conclusion that obedience is owed.

Furthermore, Simmons's philosophical anarchism—the recognition that the conditions for genuine political obligation have in practice rarely been met—maps onto Omittoism's conclusion that the conditions for legitimate divine authority have likewise not been met. Both positions reach their conclusions not by showing that the relevant institutions are unjust (though they may be), but by showing that the conditions that would generate genuine obligations—actual consent, genuine possibility of exit, comprehensible and transparent governance—have not been satisfied.

2.3 Divergences and What Omittoism Adds

Simmons's philosophical anarchism is ultimately agnostic about whether ideal legitimate political authority is possible in principle; it holds only that no existing state has achieved it. Simmons remains within the realm of the politically possible, working with realistic constraints on what governance can accomplish. Omittoism's jurisdictional framework is structurally more radical: it argues not merely that existing divine authority claims have failed to establish legitimacy, but that the very structure of the cosmic situation makes consent impossible to generate. One cannot consent to being born; one cannot meaningfully exit existence; one cannot be confronted with clear legislative terms before being subject to them. The Cosmic Audit's three criteria for legitimate authority are not merely unfulfilled but unfulfillable given the structure of the creator-creature relationship as classical theology describes it.

There is also a crucial positive dimension to Omittoism that Simmons's project largely leaves undeveloped. Simmons focuses on the conditions under which political obligation is generated and finds those conditions largely unmet; he does not develop a comprehensive alternative account of the moral foundations of social cooperation. Omittoism's Bio-Social Contract fills this gap at the cosmic level: it offers a positive account of how moral obligation is generated from the biological and social facts of shared vulnerability, providing a horizontal framework of mutual obligation that replaces the vertical Divine Covenant without depending on any of the contractarian fictions (original position, state of nature) that Simmons himself regards with suspicion.

The rational endorsement inference—that preferring existence over non-existence constitutes endorsement of the conditions of existence—conflates the object of a preference with the terms attached to it: a prisoner who prefers imprisonment to execution has not thereby endorsed the legitimacy of their sentence, because the preference is for existence under any conditions, not for the specific authority structure that governs those conditions. Genuine endorsement requires that the agent be able to separate the thing they want from the package it comes in, and the cosmic situation is precisely one in which that separation is structurally unavailable—existence and divine jurisdiction are presented as a non-negotiable bundle, which is the definition of a coerced choice rather than a free one. The preference for existence therefore tells us something about the agent's survival drive, which is a biological fact, but nothing about their endorsement of divine authority, which is a normative question—and conflating the two is precisely the move that consent theory was developed to prevent.

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Chapter III: Christine Korsgaard and the Authority That Must Come from Within

3.1 Korsgaard's Constructivist Framework

Christine Korsgaard's philosophical project, developed across The Sources of Normativity (1996), Creating the Kingdom of Ends (1996), and Self-Constitution (2009), is an attempt to answer what she calls "the normative question": Why should I act morally? What makes moral

claims binding on me? Korsgaard's answer is broadly Kantian but distinctively constructivist: moral obligations are not discovered as external facts about the world but are constituted through acts of rational reflection on one's own practical identity and values. The authority of morality derives not from God, not from pure reason abstracted from all human concerns, and not from natural facts, but from the structure of reflective agency itself.

Korsgaard's key concept is "reflective endorsement." Human beings, unlike animals, are capable of reflecting on their impulses, desires, and inclinations and asking whether they have reasons to act on them. This reflective distance creates both the problem of normativity and its solution: we must act on principles that we can reflectively endorse from the standpoint of a practical identity we are prepared to maintain. Obligations arise when a principle is constitutive of a practical identity that one's rational nature requires one to maintain. Korsgaard calls the source of normative authority the agent's "reflective endorsement" of a principle, which means that the authority of any moral requirement flows, ultimately, from the agent's own rational nature.

In The Sources of Normativity, Korsgaard explicitly examines and rejects external sources of normativity—including divine command theory. Her argument is not primarily that divine command theory gets the content of morality wrong (though she thinks it does), but that it misunderstands the structure of moral authority. If God commands X, and I ask why I should comply with God's command, I need a principle that makes divine commands binding on me. That principle—whatever it is—is the real source of my moral obligation, not the divine command itself. The divine command can motivate or inform, but it cannot by itself generate authority; that authority must ultimately flow from my own rational reflective endorsement.

3.2 Convergences with Omittoism

The convergence between Korsgaard and Omittoism is profound at the level of structural principle. Korsgaard's argument that external commands—including divine ones—cannot by themselves generate moral authority, because authority always requires a mediating principle that the agent's rational nature must recognize, is a sophisticated philosophical elaboration of what Omittoism expresses through its Axiom II, the Principle of Interactive Accountability: any entity

that demands a moral response from sentient beings thereby subjects itself to the evaluative standards of those beings.

Omittoism's concept of Jurisdictional Severance—the deliberate revocation of divine legislative authority—can be understood in Korsgaardian terms as the reflective refusal to endorse the principle that divine commands constitute binding obligations. This is not mere whim or rebellion; it is the exercise of precisely the reflective capacity that Korsgaard identifies as the seat of moral authority. The Omittoist who conducts a Cosmic Audit and finds divine governance wanting is, in Korsgaardian terms, refusing reflective endorsement of a principle—the principle that creation generates authority—that cannot survive rational scrutiny.

Furthermore, Korsgaard's emphasis on the importance of practical identity for moral obligation resonates with Omittoism's concept of the Philosophical Orphan and the aspiration to "Sovereign Selfhood." Korsgaard holds that maintaining the integrity of one's practical identity is constitutive of what it means to be a rational agent at all. Omittoism's insistence that autonomous moral reasoning supersedes claims of divine jurisdiction, and that the value of a life is not measured by safety but by the refusal to internalize coercion as virtue, reflects the same deep commitment to the inviolability of rational agency as the ultimate seat of moral authority.

Korsgaard's treatment of the "call of conscience" and her claim that morality requires treating one's own agency as an end in itself connects to Omittoism's Kantian inheritance through the framework's explicit engagement with the Categorical Imperative. Omittoism's rejection of theodical reasoning that uses finite conscious subjects as means to cosmic ends—the "soul-making" theodicy that treats children's suffering as curriculum material for metaphysical improvement—directly invokes Kantian dignity. Korsgaard's constructivism provides a sophisticated philosophical foundation for exactly this moral resistance: the integrity of each rational agent is not a means to any external end, including any divine end.

3.3 Divergences and What Omittoism Adds

Despite the deep structural convergences, Korsgaard and Omittoism part ways on the question of moral foundations. Korsgaard is a constructivist who grounds moral obligations in the activity of practical reasoning itself: the obligatory character of moral requirements is constituted through rational reflection, not discovered as an independently existing fact.

Omittoism's Axiom of Shared Vulnerability takes a more naturalistic direction, grounding ethical obligations in the biological and social facts of sentient interdependence—fragility, interdependence, causality—which are not constructed but observed. This is a significant methodological difference, though the practical implications often overlap.

More fundamentally, Korsgaard's constructivism is resolutely secular in its approach to ethics but does not develop a systematic account of why divine authority specifically is illegitimate. Her argument that external commands cannot generate authority applies equally to human authority; it is a general point about the structure of normativity, not a specific political critique of divine governance. Omittoism's Cosmic Audit goes further by applying detailed, substantive criteria—legislative clarity, proportional justice, engineering competence—to the specific record of divine governance as described by theological traditions. The result is not just the general point that authority must be internally endorsed, but the specific finding that divine governance as actually claimed fails every substantive criterion for legitimacy. Omittoism thus moves from Korsgaard's formal account of the structure of normativity to a substantive political evaluation of a particular claimant to authority.

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Chapter IV: Michael Huemer and the Common Sense of Authority's Absence

4.1 Huemer's Philosophical Project

Michael Huemer's philosophical work spans two interconnected projects that bear directly on Omittoism. The first, developed in Ethical Intuitionism (2005), defends a version of moral realism grounded in what Huemer calls "phenomenal conservatism": the view that an appearance of something being the case provides prima facie justification for believing it to be the case, and that our intuitive moral judgments—properly understood—are appearances of moral facts that provide genuine, though defeasible, epistemic warrant. The second project, developed in The Problem of Political Authority (2013), applies this intuitionist methodology to political authority and reaches the conclusion of philosophical anarchism: no state has successfully established that

it possesses genuine political authority, and the main theories advanced to justify political authority fail.

Huemer's political philosophy is notable for its argumentative strategy, which he calls the "commonsense" approach. He begins by asking what we would think of a private individual who did what governments do: collected money from others under threat of imprisonment, forced people to participate in schemes of mutual insurance, prohibited the buying and selling of certain substances, detained and punished people for violating regulations they had no role in creating. In each case, we would regard these actions as wrongful. Huemer's challenge is to explain why the same actions become permissible when performed by a state. He examines the candidate explanations—consent, democratic authorization, natural duty—and finds each of them inadequate. The result is philosophical anarchism: governments lack genuine authority, and the moral impermissibility of their coercive actions is not transformed by the label "government."

4.2 Convergences with Omittoism

The convergences between Huemer and Omittoism are among the most direct of the ten comparisons in this article, because Huemer's methodological approach to political authority maps almost perfectly onto Omittoism's Cosmic Audit methodology. Huemer's commonsense challenge—if a private individual did this, we would judge it wrong; what justifies the state in doing it?—is structurally identical to Omittoism's jurisdictional challenge: if a human being did what God allegedly does (created conscious beings without their consent, subjected them to conditions they had no voice in designing, threatened infinite punishment for finite transgression), we would judge it monstrous. What justifies calling this divine governance and treating the divine perpetrator as a legitimate authority?

Huemer's moral intuitionism provides philosophical support for a crucial move in Omittoism that might otherwise appear question-begging: the appeal to ordinary moral intuitions about proportionality, consent, and accountability as genuine evidence about what legitimacy requires. The theological critic often responds to such appeals by claiming that our intuitions are unreliable guides to the moral evaluation of divine action—that applying human standards to divine governance is a category mistake. Huemer's phenomenal conservatism provides the principled response: moral intuitions are appearances of moral facts that carry genuine epistemic

weight. The intuition that infinite punishment for finite transgression is disproportionate is not merely a contingent cultural prejudice; it is a moral appearance that must be taken seriously as evidence and that can only be overridden by equally compelling countervailing evidence. The theist who dismisses such intuitions as "mere human standards" must explain why the resulting divine governance should command anything other than fear.

Huemer's treatment of "voluntary compliance" in The Problem of Political Authority parallels Omittoism's analysis of tacit consent with precision. Huemer argues that the mere fact of living within a territory and using public services does not constitute meaningful consent to the state's authority, because these behaviors are not alternatives to other equally available options; they are behaviors undertaken under conditions of inescapability that vitiate genuine voluntariness. Omittoism makes the identical argument about continued existence: existence is not a signature on a divine contract, because non-existence is not a genuine alternative that could be chosen by the agent who would be doing the signing.

4.3 Divergences and What Omittoism Adds

The primary tension between Huemer and Omittoism concerns the direction of travel after the anarchist conclusion is reached. Huemer's philosophical anarchism is focused on human institutions: having established that states lack genuine authority, he proposes an alternative vision of social order through voluntary exchange and spontaneous coordination, exploring what a society organized without coercive political authority might look like. This is a broadly libertarian political project. Omittoism's philosophical anarchism is cosmic in scope—it extends Huemer's insights to divine authority—but its positive alternative is not libertarian but bio-social: the Bio-Social Contract grounded in shared vulnerability generates strong positive obligations of mutual care, welfare, and protection that go well beyond what libertarian spontaneous order can provide.

There is also a significant difference in the metaethical underpinning. Huemer is a non-naturalist moral realist who believes that moral facts exist independently of minds and are known through intuition. Omittoism's Axiom of Shared Vulnerability takes a more naturalistic approach, grounding moral obligations in the observable biological and social facts of sentient existence. This is a substantive metaethical difference with implications for how each framework

handles moral disagreement, relativism, and the objectivity of ethical claims. Omittoism arguably offers a more accessible foundation—one that does not require commitment to the existence of sui generis moral facts—while Huemer's intuitionism may offer a richer account of why moral facts have the categorical binding force that pure naturalism sometimes struggles to capture.

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Chapter V: Elizabeth Anderson and the Relational Critique of Divine Command

5.1 Anderson's Philosophical Contributions

Elizabeth Anderson works at the intersection of political philosophy, ethics, and social epistemology, and her contribution to this comparison comes from multiple directions. Her essay "If God Is Dead, Is Everything Permitted?" published in Philosophers Without Gods (2007), provides the most direct engagement with the moral implications of secular ethics, though her broader work on relational equality, democratic epistemology, and the authority of social norms provides equally important resources for comparison with Omittoism.

In "If God Is Dead, Is Everything Permitted?", Anderson argues against the Dostoevskian challenge to secular ethics by demonstrating that divine command ethics is not a robust alternative to secular moral foundations. Her central argument is that divine command theory faces the Euthyphro dilemma: either God commands things because they are good, in which case goodness is independent of God's commands and divine command adds nothing to moral foundations; or things are good because God commands them, in which case morality is dependent on the arbitrary will of an omnipotent being. Anderson presses the second horn: if morality is constituted by divine will, then God could, by fiat, make cruelty good and mercy bad. This makes morality hostage to divine arbitrariness in a way that should trouble any serious moral thinker. Anderson's conclusion is that secular ethics, grounded in human interests, social relations, and democratic deliberation, provides a more stable and more genuinely moral foundation than divine command.

Anderson's broader philosophical work on relational equality argues that justice is fundamentally about the quality of relationships among persons—that equality requires not the equalization of welfare but the elimination of social hierarchies that position some persons as inferiors to others. Her democratic theory emphasizes the importance of epistemic equality: in a just democracy, everyone's perspective is entitled to a hearing, and no group may claim epistemic authority over others simply in virtue of their social position.

5.2 Convergences with Omittoism

Anderson's critique of divine command theory through the Euthyphro dilemma converges with Omittoism's Principle of Interactive Accountability from a different direction. Omittoism's Principle states that any entity that demands a moral response from sentient beings thereby subjects itself to the evaluative standards of those beings—one cannot coherently demand love while claiming immunity from standards of lovability. Anderson's Euthyphro argument reaches a similar conclusion: either God operates within a moral framework that is independent of divine will (and therefore divine commands add nothing), or God constitutes the moral framework through will (in which case it is arbitrary and untrustworthy). Either way, divine command theory fails to provide a robust moral foundation, and the evaluative standards that actually govern morality are either independent of God or contingently aligned with divine preferences in ways that God could reverse.

Anderson's critique of divine moral exemplarism is particularly resonant with Omittoism. Anderson argues that even if we grant God's existence and goodness, the conduct attributed to God in religious texts makes God a poor moral exemplar for humans to emulate. A being who commands genocide, sanctions slavery, and consigns billions to eternal torment for finite offenses is not a model of moral excellence that humanity should aspire to imitate. This argument parallels Omittoism's Foreknowledge Liability Clause: an omniscient creator who designs systems with foreknowledge of the suffering, injustice, and evil they will produce cannot claim exemption from engineering accountability. The moral profile of the universe's designer, read off from the universe's moral profile, does not warrant the deference demanded.

Anderson's relational egalitarianism provides a powerful framework for understanding what Omittoism means by the Bio-Social Contract. Anderson argues that justice requires

relationships of equality—relationships in which each party recognizes the other as a person with equal standing, not as an inferior whose interests are to be weighed against the superior's convenience. Omittoism's Bio-Social Contract is precisely a framework for horizontal relations of mutual recognition among beings who acknowledge each other's shared vulnerability. The contrast with the divine-human relationship as classical theology describes it is instructive: a relationship between an omnipotent creator and a creature who must worship, obey, and be grateful for existence is structurally the paradigm of the kind of hierarchical relationship that Anderson's relational egalitarianism condemns as fundamentally unjust.

Anderson's democratic epistemology—the view that in a just polity, epistemic authority is distributed rather than concentrated, and that policy must be responsive to the perspectives of all affected parties—directly parallels Omittoism's Public Reason Principle. Both hold that in a pluralistic society, legitimate governance requires justifications that are accessible and evaluable by all citizens, not merely by those who share a particular theological perspective. The requirement of public reason is the democratic application of the same principle that Omittoism applies at the cosmic level: authority that cannot justify itself in terms comprehensible to those over whom it is exercised is not genuine authority.

5.3 Divergences and What Omittoism Adds

Anderson does not develop a comprehensive political theory of divine authority's illegitimacy; her work in philosophy of religion is critical and diagnostic rather than systematic. Omittoism provides the systematic political framework that Anderson's critique implies but does not develop: the Cosmic Audit, with its three specific criteria for legitimate governance, gives determinate content to the judgment that divine authority fails its legitimacy test. Anderson identifies the symptoms; Omittoism provides the diagnostic framework and the political theory of what legitimate divine governance would require (Consentheism) and why actual theological systems fail to achieve it.

There is also a significant difference in political orientation. Anderson's relational egalitarianism generates strong egalitarian conclusions about social and economic policy that Omittoism's framework is compatible with but does not uniquely generate. Omittoism's Bio-Social Contract can support robust egalitarian commitments through the Diachronic

Reciprocity argument—the recognition that rational agents who anticipate their own future vulnerability have strong reasons to maintain universal social protections—but it does not have the specifically egalitarian relational dimension that Anderson's framework provides. The two frameworks are complementary rather than competing, with Anderson's relational egalitarianism filling out the social dimensions of the Bio-Social Contract in ways that Omittoism's primarily political and philosophical framework leaves open.

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Chapter VI: James P. Sterba and the Logical Incompatibility of Divine Goodness

6.1 Sterba's Argument

James P. Sterba is the contemporary philosopher who has most rigorously pressed the logical (as opposed to merely evidential) problem of evil. In Is a Good God Logically Possible? (2019) and several preceding papers, Sterba argues that the existence of horrendous evil is not merely improbable given a perfectly good God, but logically incompatible with it. His argument is that a morally perfect God would be morally required to prevent easily preventable evil—evil whose prevention would not result in the loss of compensating greater goods. Since horrendous evil of this kind exists in abundance, a morally perfect God does not exist.

Sterba's argument is carefully constructed to neutralize the most sophisticated defenses of theistic belief. Against the free will defense, Sterba argues that even granting the value of libertarian free will, God could have created beings with a significantly better track record of free choices while still preserving genuine freedom—creating, in effect, beings whose freedom expresses itself more consistently in virtuous directions without being thereby undermined. Against soul-making theodicies, Sterba argues that the specific instances of horrendous suffering—the torture of children, the suffering of innocents in natural disasters, the agonies of terminal illness in those who have barely begun to live—are not plausibly interpreted as pedagogically necessary for moral development, because they far exceed any reasonable calibration of educational adversity. Against skeptical theism, Sterba argues that invoking human cognitive limitations to explain why we cannot perceive the greater goods that allegedly justify

horrendous evil is epistemically irresponsible: our inability to perceive adequate justifications, in cases where adequate justifications should be perceivable if they existed, is positive evidence for their absence.

6.2 Convergences with Omittoism

Sterba and Omittoism share substantial argumentative ground in their critiques of the specific theodical strategies deployed to defend divine authority. Omittoism's Foreknowledge Liability Clause—the principle that an omniscient creator bears full engineering responsibility for every structural defect in systems they knowingly designed—is the jurisdictional translation of Sterba's central logical point: a being who knowingly creates systems that produce horrendous suffering, when alternatives were available, does not merely fail the loving parent standard; it fails the basic standard of competent and responsible design.

The parallelism is especially close in Omittoism's response to the soul-making theodicy, where Omittoism introduces the concept of "soul-crushing" to describe suffering that does not build character but annihilates the self—suffering that kills the student before the lesson is learned, that produces permanent neurological damage rather than moral growth, that erases the very self that virtues would improve. Sterba's argument that horrendous evil exceeds any plausible pedagogical calibration reaches the same conclusion through careful logical analysis. Both Sterba and Omittoism insist that even the most favorable interpretation of suffering-as-education must confront instances of suffering that no reasonable educator would design and no reasonable student would consent to enroll in.

Sterba's treatment of the consent requirement in his discussion of soul-making is particularly revealing. Sterba notes that even if suffering were genuinely pedagogically necessary for some forms of moral development, this would not justify imposing it on unwilling subjects without their prior informed consent. This is the Omittoist Consent Constraint expressed within the theodicy debate: legitimate "education" (if that is what divine suffering is) requires the consent of the educated. A God who subjects creatures to traumatic suffering without consent, on the grounds that it is for their development, is guilty of precisely the kind of paternalistic coercion that the Consent Constraint prohibits.

6.3 Divergences and What Omittoism Adds

The crucial divergence between Sterba and Omittoism is the same structural divergence that separates Omittoism from all positions operating within the ontological paradigm: Sterba's project aims to establish the logical impossibility of a perfectly good God given the world's evil, while Omittoism's jurisdictional project is agnostic about God's existence and focuses on the conditions for legitimate authority regardless of existence.

This structural difference has a significant practical consequence. If Sterba's argument succeeds—if the existence of a perfectly good God is logically impossible—then the authority question becomes moot: there is no divine claimant to authority. But if Sterba's argument fails—if a sophisticated theodicy succeeds in showing that horrendous evil is logically compatible with divine perfection—then theistic authority claims remain untouched. Omittoism's jurisdictional framework is immune to this vulnerability: even a perfect theodicy that successfully reconciles every instance of horrendous suffering with divine goodness leaves the Consent Constraint fully operative. One may concede that God had sufficient reasons for permitting all the world's suffering while still maintaining that rational agents who did not consent to be enrolled in the soul-making program are not thereby obligated to recognize the programmer's authority over their moral lives.

Omittoism thus occupies a position that is both compatible with Sterba's argument and strategically superior: it does not depend on the logical problem of evil for its central conclusions, making it robust even against the possibility that Sterba's argument could be successfully rebutted. The jurisdictional critique is, in this sense, deeper than the logical critique of evil: it operates at the level of authority rather than at the level of existence or goodness, and it reaches its conclusions through premises—the requirements of consent and accountability for legitimate authority—that are less controversial and more widely shared than the premises of the logical problem of evil.

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Chapter VII: Erik Wielenberg and the Autonomy of Moral Facts

7.1 Wielenberg's Non-Theistic Moral Realism

Erik Wielenberg occupies a distinctive and philosophically important position in contemporary philosophy of religion and metaethics: he is a moral realist who defends the objectivity and mind-independence of moral facts while firmly rejecting the view that those facts require theological grounding. His works Value and Virtue in a Godless Universe (2005) and Robust Ethics: The Metaphysics and Epistemology of Godless Normative Realism (2014) develop a systematic account of how moral facts can be objective, knowable, and binding without God.

Wielenberg's metaethical position is non-natural, non-theistic moral realism. He argues that moral facts are sui generis—they are not reducible to natural facts (contrary to naturalism) or dependent on divine will (contrary to divine command theory and modified divine command theories). Moral properties are brute features of the world that supervene on natural properties but are not identical with them. We know moral facts through a kind of faculty of moral perception or intuition that, while not infallible, provides genuine evidence about the moral domain.

Wielenberg has also written extensively on the specific question of whether theistic ethics provides a superior foundation to secular ethics. In "God and Morality" and related papers, he develops sophisticated versions of the Euthyphro dilemma against divine command theory and responds to theistic attempts to ground morality in God's nature rather than God's commands. His conclusion is that none of the theistic grounding strategies succeeds: moral facts are autonomous, and their autonomy is not a deficiency but a feature of a morally serious universe.

7.2 Convergences with Omittoism

Wielenberg's defense of non-theistic moral realism provides important philosophical support for Omittoism's claim that ethics can be rationally binding, universally applicable, and independent of divine command simultaneously. Omittoism requires that its Bio-Social Contract generate genuine obligations—not merely contingent preferences or cultural conventions—and Wielenberg's work demonstrates that objective moral facts and genuine moral obligations are available without theological grounding. The existence of non-theistic moral realism as a philosophically serious and defensible position answers the standard objection that Omittoism's secular ethics must collapse into relativism or mere preference.

Wielenberg's response to the Euthyphro dilemma converges with Omittoism's Principle of Interactive Accountability through a different but complementary route. Wielenberg argues that if God commands X because X is good, then goodness is independent of God—which means that what actually does the moral work is the goodness of X, not God's command. Omittoism's Principle of Interactive Accountability makes a parallel point in terms of authority rather than grounding: any entity that demands responses from rational agents thereby subjects itself to the evaluative standards those agents bring to bear. The structure of the demand itself presupposes the evaluative authority of the agent being demanded of. Both points—Wielenberg's about moral grounding and Omittoism's about the structure of demand—show that the agent's evaluative perspective cannot be simply overridden by divine fiat without collapsing the coherence of the demand itself.

Wielenberg's treatment of moral knowledge through intuition parallels Omittoism's implicit epistemology of moral assessment in the Cosmic Audit. The Cosmic Audit applies criteria—proportionality, legislative clarity, consent—that are themselves grounded in moral intuitions about what legitimate governance requires. Wielenberg's defense of intuition as a source of genuine moral knowledge provides the epistemological warrant for this procedure. When Omittoism insists that infinite punishment for finite transgression is disproportionate, this judgment is not merely a subjective feeling or a culturally conditioned preference; on Wielenberg's account, it is an appearance of a moral fact that carries genuine evidential weight.

7.3 Divergences and What Omittoism Adds

The most significant difference between Wielenberg and Omittoism is metaethical. Wielenberg defends non-natural moral realism: moral facts exist mind-independently, are not identical with natural facts, and are known through a distinctive faculty of moral intuition. Omittoism's Axiom of Shared Vulnerability takes a naturalistic direction: moral obligations are grounded in the biological and social facts of sentient interdependence—fragility, interdependence, and the causal structure of social cooperation. This is closer to a naturalistic constructivism than to Wielenberg's non-naturalist realism.

This metaethical difference has practical implications. Wielenberg's non-naturalism faces the challenge of explaining how non-natural moral facts can motivate action and how they can be

known by natural beings with natural cognitive faculties. Omittoism's naturalistic approach avoids these challenges by anchoring moral facts in observable features of the natural world. On the other hand, Wielenberg's moral realism may provide a more robust account of why moral obligations have categorical binding force—why they are not merely hypothetical imperatives that apply only if one happens to care about certain goods. The Bio-Social Contract's conditional structure (if you value your own flourishing, then...) may leave open the question of those rare agents who genuinely do not value their own flourishing or the flourishing of others.

Crucially, Wielenberg does not engage the political question of authority that is Omittoism's central preoccupation. His project is metaethical: establishing that moral facts are objective and independent of God. He does not develop a systematic theory of what makes governance—divine or human—legitimate, or analyze the conditions under which political authority can be claimed and rejected. Omittoism provides this political theory, extending Wielenberg's metaethical conclusions into the domain of authority theory. If moral facts are autonomous of divine command (as Wielenberg argues), then divine commands derive whatever moral force they might have from independently existing moral facts, which means that the question of whether any divine command meets the standards of legitimate authority—standards that are themselves morally grounded—becomes philosophically open in exactly the way Omittoism's Cosmic Audit pursues.

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Chapter VIII: Mark C. Murphy and the Most Sophisticated Defense of Divine Authority

8.1 Murphy's Theistic Framework

Mark C. Murphy represents the most philosophically sophisticated contemporary defense of divine authority, and his work therefore constitutes the most important and revealing point of opposition for Omittoism. Murphy's An Essay on Divine Authority (2002) and God and Moral Law: On the Theistic Explanation of Morality (2011), along with his extensive engagement with natural law theory in Natural Law and Practical Rationality (2001), develop a nuanced account

of divine authority that is explicitly designed to meet the most serious objections from political philosophy and moral theory.

Murphy's central thesis in An Essay on Divine Authority is that God does possess genuine authority over rational creatures, but that this authority is not arbitrary, not reducible to power, and not coercive in the sense that makes it morally objectionable. Murphy distinguishes several dimensions of the authority question: whether God has the right to rule (de iure authority), whether God's rules are binding on us, and whether compliance with God's rules is morally required. He argues that God has de iure authority over creatures in virtue of a combination of God's perfect goodness, God's comprehensive knowledge of what is genuinely good for creatures, and the relation of creatures' genuine flourishing to conformity with God's commands.

Murphy's account is importantly different from crude divine command theory. He does not hold that morality is constituted by divine will in the way that makes cruelty good if God commands it. Instead, he argues that moral truths exist independently (as Wielenberg holds), but that God, as a being of perfect goodness and perfect knowledge, is uniquely positioned to serve as an authoritative guide to those truths—an "authority as service" model in which God's commands track and communicate independently existing moral requirements. On this model, divine authority is more like the authority of a uniquely reliable expert than the authority of a sovereign whose will constitutes law.

8.2 The Core Tension with Omittoism

Murphy's framework is the most serious philosophical challenge to Omittoism, and the engagement between them is the most dialectically rich of the ten comparisons in this article. Murphy has anticipated many of the jurisdictional objections and developed sophisticated responses.

Against the consent requirement, Murphy argues that consent is not the only source of legitimate authority—that authority can also arise from the service model, where an authoritative figure's superior knowledge and benevolent intentions generate genuine reasons to comply with their guidance, independently of consent. The analogy he offers is the authority of expertise: a doctor who knows that a patient needs a certain medication has authority to prescribe it even

without the patient's prior consent to the doctor's authority, because the doctor's superior knowledge places them in a position where their guidance genuinely serves the patient's interests. If God is analogous to such an expert—one whose commands are invariably aligned with creatures' genuine flourishing—then God has authority of the service kind.

This is a sophisticated response that deserves serious engagement. Omittoism's reply operates at multiple levels. First, the analogy of expertise underestimates the asymmetry of the divine-human relationship. A doctor's authority is temporary, revocable, domain-specific, and subject to oversight. The patient can seek a second opinion, can discharge the doctor, and can appeal to other authorities. Divine authority as classically described is none of these things: it is absolute, irrevocable, universal, and self-certifying. The conditions that make expertise-based authority legitimate—accountability, specificity, and contestability—are precisely the conditions that divine authority is claimed to transcend.

Second, Murphy's service model assumes that divine commands invariably track genuine goods for creatures. But the Cosmic Audit's criterion of engineering competence raises precisely this question: is the evidence available from the created world consistent with the hypothesis of a designer whose commands invariably track creaturely flourishing? The existence of childhood cancer, the design of parasites that exclusively target children's nervous systems, the foreknown creation of sentient beings who will experience lives of unmitigated suffering—these features of the design are not consistent with the hypothesis that the designer's commands reliably track creaturely flourishing. If the engineer's track record is this, the expertise claim is not established.

The skeptical theist who invokes hidden expert data to defend the service model faces a precise and formal burden: in every other domain where we defer to expertise despite incomplete information—medicine, engineering, law—the expert's authority is warranted not by the mere assertion of hidden competence but by a verifiable track record, institutional accountability, and the structural possibility of audit. If the divine expert's data is by definition inaccessible to the patient, the analogy to medicine collapses entirely, because what makes medical deference rational is precisely that outcomes are observable, mechanisms are investigable, and the physician can be held accountable when the record warrants it. The epistemic barrier that skeptical theism erects is therefore not a defense of the service model but its refutation: an expertise claim that is structurally insulated from all verification, accountability, and

outcome-tracking is indistinguishable, from the patient's rational standpoint, from the assertion of expertise by someone who has none—and deferring to unverifiable authority is not epistemic humility but epistemic surrender.

Third, and most fundamentally, Omittoism challenges the service model's implication that any degree of superior knowledge and benevolence, without consent, generates authority. This is precisely the argument that parents do not own their adult children despite knowing more and caring more about them. The Axiom I of Jurisdictional Sovereignty—the Independence of Legitimacy—holds that the capacity to create, care for, or have superior knowledge about an entity does not generate authority over that entity. Murphy's response would need to explain why superior benevolence crosses the threshold from advisory influence to genuine authority without consent. Murphy does recognize this challenge and argues that the creature's own good requires conformity with divine commands, but Omittoism insists this is precisely what is at issue: the creature's own good, as defined by the creature through reflective endorsement of its practical identity, may not include submission to any authority it did not consent to.

8.3 The Thomistic Challenge and Omittoism's Response

Murphy's natural law framework is grounded in a Thomistic metaphysics of human nature and its teleological orientation toward genuine goods. On this view, morality is not an external constraint imposed on human beings but an expression of what it means for human beings to flourish—to achieve the goods that human nature is constitutively oriented toward. Divine commands, on the natural law account, are not arbitrary impositions but expressions of the same moral order that human nature is oriented toward. God is not commanding us to do things that are foreign to our nature; God is, in Murphy's and Aquinas's sense, commanding us to be what we most fundamentally are.

Omittoism has a carefully developed response to this position, expressed through what it calls the phototropism objection. Even if rational agents have a teleological orientation toward certain goods—including perhaps a natural orientation toward their own flourishing and toward social cooperation with others—this natural orientation does not generate a duty of worship or submission to any external authority, including divine authority. We may be "oriented toward" certain goods in the way that plants are oriented toward light, but phototropism generates no

moral obligations for the plant. The Thomist response either collapses divine authority into natural constitution—in which case it is not the kind of authority that generates obligations of worship, since the orientation is built into our nature rather than commanded—or maintains genuine command authority, which requires consent-based justification that the natural law framework cannot provide.

Furthermore, Omittoism introduces what it calls Juridical Cleavage: the logical trap by which any deity that chooses to judge human beings—assigning guilt, demanding repentance, threatening punishment—implicitly grants those humans the status of independent agents capable of genuine refusal. Murphy's framework, by attributing to God the role of moral legislator and judge, must acknowledge the independence that it simultaneously seeks to subordinate. The divine judgment that pronounces human beings guilty presupposes that those beings are separate enough from God to be the authors of their own actions—which is precisely the ontological independence that supports jurisdictional sovereignty.

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Chapter IX: Wes Morriston and the Analytic Critique of Theistic Ethics

9.1 Morriston's Critical Project

Wes Morriston is a philosopher of religion whose extensive body of critical work in analytic theology and philosophy of religion has consistently targeted the weakest points in arguments for divine authority, divine goodness, and theistically grounded ethics. His contributions span several interconnected debates: the arbitrariness problem for divine command theory, the incoherence of the moral argument for God's existence, the specific failures of divine command theory and modified divine command theory, and the problem of the epistemology of divine goodness. His papers—including "God and the Ontological Foundation of Morality," "Omnipotence and the Anselmian God," "Evaluating the Moral Argument," and "God's Commands and the Independence of Morality"—represent some of the most precise and technically rigorous critiques of theistic ethics in the recent literature.

Morriston's central target is the theological claim that God provides the necessary foundation for objective morality—the claim that without God, morality collapses into relativism or subjectivism. He attacks this claim from multiple directions. Against divine command theory, he presses the Euthyphro dilemma with particular precision, arguing that no version of divine command theory successfully navigates between the Scylla of arbitrariness (if God's commands constitute morality, God could make gratuitous cruelty morally required) and the Charybdis of redundancy (if God's commands track independently existing moral facts, the commands add nothing to the moral facts themselves). Against the moral argument for God's existence, Morriston argues that the argument equivocates on key terms, makes unjustified assumptions about the relationship between moral facts and their metaphysical grounds, and fails to establish that the personal God of theism (rather than, say, abstract Platonic moral forms) is the required ground of moral objectivity.

Morriston is also notable for his engagement with the specific consequences of divine command ethics for the moral evaluation of divine actions. He argues that if God's commands constitute morality, then God's commands cannot themselves be morally evaluated—the God who commands genocide in the Hebrew Bible cannot be said to have done wrong, because there is no moral standard independent of God's will by which God's actions could be assessed as wrong. But this means that divine command theory renders God's actions morally unevaluable, which in turn makes divine goodness an empty concept. A God who is good by definition, where "good" means "whatever God commands," is not morally admirable in any meaningful sense.

9.2 Convergences with Omittoism

The convergences between Morriston's critical project and Omittoism are extensive, though they approach the same territory through different methodologies. Morriston's Euthyphro argument and Omittoism's Principle of Interactive Accountability reach the same structural conclusion from different directions: divine commands cannot simultaneously constitute moral reality and be exempt from moral evaluation. Omittoism's Principle holds that any entity that demands a moral response from rational agents thereby submits itself to the evaluative standards of those agents—the demand and the audit come together. Morriston's Euthyphro argument shows that divine commands either track independent moral standards (in which case those standards do the real moral work) or constitute moral standards arbitrarily (in which case they

are untrustworthy). Both positions converge on the conclusion that divine moral authority is either redundant or illegitimate.

Morriston's argument that divine command theory renders God's actions morally unevaluable maps directly onto Omittoism's response to the objection that God cannot be judged by human standards. Omittoism's reply: if divine hiddenness and the claim that human standards do not apply to God are both asserted simultaneously, then the basis for worship—God's goodness—collapses. You cannot coherently claim that God is good (in a sense that warrants worship and obedience) while also claiming that the standards by which goodness is assessed are inapplicable to God. Morriston's technical argument and Omittoism's political argument reach identical conclusions about the self-defeating character of this combined claim.

Morriston's work on the epistemology of divine goodness is particularly relevant to Omittoism's response to skeptical theism. Morriston argues that if our cognitive faculties are as limited as skeptical theism requires—if we genuinely cannot evaluate divine actions by our own standards—then we cannot know that God is good, and the entire basis for theistic worship is undermined. Omittoism makes this argument more specifically: if our faculties are too limited to judge apparent evil as genuine evil, they are equally too limited to judge apparent good as genuine good. Skeptical theism, taken seriously, destroys the rational basis for worship as thoroughly as it destroys the rational basis for complaint. Both Morriston and Omittoism recognize that this self-defeating character of skeptical theism is not merely an inconvenience for theists but a fundamental incoherence in the structure of the theistic position.

Morriston's engagement with the problem of divinely commanded atrocities—the genocide passages in the Hebrew Bible, the sanctioned killing of non-combatants in religious warfare—connects to Omittoism's broader critique of divine governance. Morriston argues that a divine command theorist who insists that whatever God commands is morally required is committed to endorsing any action God commands, no matter how horrific by ordinary moral standards. This has the implication that the moral intuitions most central to human moral life—the wrongness of killing innocent children, the wrongness of genocide—are merely contingent preferences that God could override by command. Omittoism's Foreknowledge Liability Clause makes a parallel structural point: a designer who knowingly creates systems that produce atrocities, when alternatives were available, cannot escape accountability by claiming

divine prerogative. Both Morriston and Omittoism insist that ordinary moral intuitions retain their evidential force against theological override attempts.

9.3 Divergences and What Omittoism Adds

Morriston's project is primarily destructive in the technical philosophical sense: it aims to identify the failures and incoherencies in theistic ethics, demonstrating that divine command theory, modified divine command theory, and the moral argument for theism all fail on their own terms. It is a work of analytic philosophy of religion that clears the ground without constructing a comprehensive positive alternative.

Omittoism provides what Morriston's project lacks: a systematic positive framework. The Axiom of Shared Vulnerability and the Bio-Social Contract are not merely the absence of divine command ethics but a fully developed alternative account of moral grounding. The Doctrine of Finitude is not merely the rejection of eschatological consolation but a positive framework for understanding the moral urgency of present action. Causal Immortality is not merely the denial of personal survival after death but a genuine account of what persists and matters about a human life. These positive contributions transform what might otherwise be a merely critical enterprise into a constructive philosophical framework for human life, ethics, and community.

Furthermore, Morriston operates primarily within the analytic philosophy of religion, engaging arguments internal to that tradition. Omittoism introduces a different conceptual vocabulary—the vocabulary of political philosophy—that reframes the entire debate. By asking not "Does God exist?" or "Is divine command theory coherent?" but "Does any entity meet the conditions for legitimate authority over rational agents?" Omittoism shifts the terrain in a way that exposes structural features of the divine authority claim that remain invisible within the internal disputes of philosophy of religion. The jurisdictional paradigm reveals that theistic ethics faces not just the Euthyphro problem (an internal philosophical dilemma) but the consent problem (a political philosophical problem that applies to all governance claims), and that the consent problem is in some respects more fundamental because it applies regardless of whether the Euthyphro problem can be resolved.

Morriston's work on the epistemology of divine goodness also invites a further Omittoist development that he does not himself pursue. If we cannot know God is good because divine

goodness is defined tautologically (through divine command theory), and if skeptical theism undermines the basis for positive as well as negative theological assessments, then the epistemological situation for evaluating divine governance is one of radical uncertainty. Omittoism's Hex-State analysis addresses this situation directly: it demonstrates that human jurisdictional sovereignty is the necessary conclusion across all six exhaustive categories of what any divine entity could be—known good sovereign, silent deist, absent void, simulator, extraterrestrial colonizer, or superintelligence. The Hex-State analysis is Morriston's epistemological agnosticism made into a positive political conclusion: whatever the theological reality, the appropriate political stance for rational agents is the same.

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Chapter X: Graham Oppy and the Worldview Competition That Omittoism Transcends

10.1 Oppy's Philosophical Project

Graham Oppy is among the most prolific and philosophically rigorous contemporary contributors to philosophy of religion, and his sustained output—spanning Ontological Arguments and Belief in God (1995), Arguing about Gods (2006), Describing Gods (2014), Reinventing Philosophy of Religion (2014), Naturalism and Religion (2018), and numerous analytical papers—represents the most comprehensive attempt in recent analytic philosophy to adjudicate, at the level of entire worldviews rather than individual arguments, the competition between theism and naturalism. His institutional affiliation with Monash University, shared coincidentally with Amanov, makes the intellectual comparison particularly immediate, even if the two thinkers have arrived at their respective positions through entirely independent routes.

Oppy's methodology is distinctive and worth characterizing with some precision, because it is precisely what sets up the most productive tension with Omittoism. In Arguing about Gods, Oppy examines every major class of argument for the existence of God—cosmological, ontological, teleological, moral, experiential, and others—and subjects each to rigorous critical scrutiny. His conclusion is not simply that these arguments fail; it is that they fail in a specific

and philosophically illuminating way. They fail to be dialectically compelling: that is, a rational, well-informed person who does not already share the background assumptions of the arguer is not rationally required to revise their position in light of any of the arguments surveyed. Oppy calls this property "dialectical neutrality." The arguments may be internally valid; they may even be sound; but because their premises are themselves contested at the level of worldview commitment, they do not succeed in moving the rational interlocutor who lacks those background commitments.

This methodological conclusion shapes Oppy's broader project in Reinventing Philosophy of Religion, where he proposes that the discipline should be reformed: instead of evaluating individual arguments in isolation, philosophers of religion should compare entire worldviews—theism and naturalism as global theoretical frameworks—by the same criteria used to compare scientific theories: internal consistency, parsimony, explanatory breadth, fit with independently established knowledge, and theoretical elegance. When this comparison is conducted, Oppy argues in Naturalism and Religion, naturalism emerges as the clearly superior worldview: it posits fewer unexplained entities, integrates seamlessly with the natural sciences, requires no special pleading for exceptions to otherwise universal regularities, and generates no intractable internal puzzles of the kind that have plagued theism for centuries (the problem of evil, the problem of divine hiddenness, the coherence of classical divine attributes). Theism, by contrast, multiplies ontological commitments beyond necessity, generates persistent and unresolved internal difficulties, and requires increasingly baroque epicycles to accommodate the deliverances of cosmology, biology, and neuroscience.

In Describing Gods, Oppy turns to the question of whether classical theistic descriptions of God—omnipotence, omniscience, perfect goodness, necessary existence, simplicity, impassibility—are individually coherent and jointly consistent. His analysis identifies multiple points of tension: omnipotence and perfect freedom may be incompatible; necessary existence and personhood are philosophically difficult to reconcile; impassibility and responsive love pull in different directions. These internal incoherences further weaken theism's standing in the worldview competition, not by proving theism false from the outside but by demonstrating that its internal architecture is structurally unstable.

10.2 Convergences with Omittoism

The convergences between Oppy's comprehensive project and Omittoism are substantial, though they operate at different levels of the philosophical enterprise. The most immediate and practically significant convergence is between Oppy's demolition of arguments for God in Arguing about Gods and Omittoism's Cosmic Audit. If no argument for God's existence succeeds in establishing that divine authority has a credible claimant—if the evidentiary basis for theism is as weak as Oppy's comprehensive survey suggests—then Omittoism's Cosmic Audit operates on authority claims that are antecedently under-supported. The two projects are mutually reinforcing: Oppy undermines the ontological credentials of divine authority claims; Omittoism then applies the political test and finds the governance record wanting even under the most favorable ontological assumptions. Together they constitute a two-stage rebuttal: the first stage casts doubt on whether the claimant to authority exists; the second stage demonstrates that even if the claimant exists, its authority is not legitimate.

Oppy's global theoretical virtues framework resonates deeply with Omittoism's methodological stance. Both thinkers insist that theological claims must be assessed by external, universally applicable standards rather than by criteria internal to the theological tradition itself. Oppy applies the standards of scientific theory assessment—parsimony, explanatory coherence, fit with independent knowledge—to the competition between worldviews. Omittoism applies the standards of political legitimacy theory—consent, accountability, proportionality—to divine governance claims. In both cases, the move is the same: to refuse the theological tradition's claim to self-certifying status and to insist that it be evaluated by criteria whose validity does not presuppose the truth of the tradition under examination. This is the shared methodological core of two projects that reach their conclusions by different disciplinary routes.

Oppy's finding that the internal architecture of classical theism is structurally unstable—that the divine attributes are difficult to render jointly consistent—amplifies Omittoism's Foreknowledge Liability Clause in a particular way. The Foreknowledge Liability Clause holds that an omniscient creator bears full engineering responsibility for every foreknown structural defect in the systems they design. If Oppy is correct that omniscience, omnipotence, and perfect goodness are themselves difficult to render coherent simultaneously, then the Foreknowledge Liability Clause has a reflexive application: a God who designed the divine

nature itself (or whose nature is self-necessitated) bears responsibility for the incoherencies in that design. A governance claim issued by an authority whose very description is internally inconsistent fails not only the political tests of Omittoism's Cosmic Audit but the basic logical requirement of coherent agency.

Oppy's treatment of the moral argument for theism—his sustained engagement with the claim that objective morality requires a divine foundation—directly supports Omittoism's Bio-Social Contract by undermining the main alternative. Oppy argues, convergently with Wielenberg and Anderson, that the moral argument fails because naturalists can provide equally adequate (and arguably superior) accounts of moral objectivity without invoking God. Every version of the moral argument either commits to divine command theory (generating the Euthyphro problem) or to a softer claim that God is the best explanation of moral facts (which Oppy shows to be question-begging against the naturalist who offers an alternative explanation). If the moral argument fails, then the theistic alternative to Omittoism's Bio-Social Contract cannot claim the argumentative high ground that it would need to displace it.

10.3 The Dialectical Neutrality Problem: Omittoism's Most Distinctive Challenge to Oppy

The most philosophically generative tension between Oppy and Omittoism concerns the concept of dialectical neutrality. Oppy's central methodological finding is that arguments in philosophy of religion do not succeed in rationally compelling those who do not already share the arguer's background commitments. The theist and the atheist, on Oppy's account, are each rational in maintaining their respective positions given their respective background assumptions, and no individual argument succeeds in bridging the gap between worldviews. The debate can only be adjudicated at the global theoretical level—by comparing the overall theoretical virtues of entire worldviews—and even this comparison may not achieve decisive resolution in cases where reasonable people disagree about how to weight the relevant theoretical virtues.

Omittoism's jurisdictional argument presents a potential counterexample to this picture of dialectical neutrality—and this is among the most important and least recognized contributions of Omittoism to the methodology of philosophy of religion. The Consent Constraint, Omittoism's central political premise, is not a philosophically esoteric claim that only naturalists endorse. It is a principle—that legitimate authority over rational agents requires their consent or the

meaningful possibility of exit—that theists themselves accept and apply consistently in every political context. No serious theistic philosopher defends the divine right of kings; no serious theistic philosopher holds that a human government's capacity to create conditions of life for its citizens generates unlimited authority over them. The principle that creation and power do not constitute authority without consent is as theistically accepted as it is naturalistically accepted. It is part of the shared political philosophical inheritance of post-Enlightenment rational discourse that cuts across all metaphysical commitments.

If this is correct, then Omittoism's jurisdictional argument is not dialectically neutral in Oppy's sense: it operates from premises that theists and naturalists share, and it applies those premises to a domain—divine governance—where their implications have not been consistently drawn. The argument does not require the theist to abandon their background metaphysical commitments before engaging; it asks only that they apply consistently the political philosophical commitments they already hold. This gives the jurisdictional argument a dialectical traction that Oppy's comprehensive survey of theistic arguments suggests other approaches lack. Omittoism may therefore identify the one avenue of approach to the divine authority question that achieves genuine dialectical non-neutrality: not by proving that God does not exist (which Oppy correctly identifies as dialectically ineffective), but by showing that even if God exists, and even granting all of a theist's background metaphysical assumptions, the governance claim fails by the theist's own political standards.

10.4 Divergences and What Omittoism Adds

Despite the substantial convergences, Oppy and Omittoism diverge significantly in scope, methodology, and positive ambition. Oppy's project is primarily comparative and adjudicative at the ontological level: it asks which worldview—theism or naturalism—is better supported by argument and evidence, and it answers in favor of naturalism. It does not address the political question of authority that is Omittoism's central preoccupation. Oppy's philosophical universe is populated by worldviews competing for rational assent; Omittoism's philosophical universe is populated by authority claims competing for legitimate jurisdiction. These are related but genuinely distinct enterprises, and Oppy's tools—while invaluable for the first enterprise—were not designed for the second.

Oppy's skepticism about the dialectical efficacy of philosophical arguments creates a further divergence. If Oppy is correct that worldview-level commitments are sufficiently deep and resistant that no individual argument can shift them, then even Omittoism's jurisdictional argument might be met with the response that the theist does not, in fact, accept the Consent Constraint as Omittoism applies it—that their background commitments lead them to interpret the divine-human relationship in ways that make the political analogy inapplicable. Omittoism's response—that the theist thereby concedes the jurisdiction question by making divine authority structurally non-political and therefore non-obligatory in the relevant sense—is philosophically compelling, but whether it achieves Oppy's standard of dialectical compellingness for an ideally rational interlocutor with theistic background commitments remains genuinely open.

What Omittoism adds to Oppy's project is, ultimately, of two kinds. First, the jurisdictional argument potentially overcomes the dialectical neutrality that Oppy identifies as the chronic limitation of philosophy of religion, by anchoring its premises in shared political philosophical commitments rather than contested metaphysical ones. If this succeeds, it represents a methodological breakthrough that Oppy's own framework would require him to acknowledge: an argument in philosophy of religion that achieves genuine dialectical purchase across worldview boundaries. Second, Omittoism provides the positive philosophical architecture that Oppy's naturalism largely leaves undeveloped. Oppy's naturalism is a worldview that wins a theoretical competition; Omittoism's Omittoism is a philosophy that tells one how to live, what to value, how to ground ethics, how to understand mortality, and how to build community—after the theoretical competition has been settled. These are not competing contributions but sequential ones: Oppy establishes that the theological throne is likely empty; Omittoism establishes that even if it is occupied, its occupant holds no legitimate jurisdiction; and Omittoism further asks what human life, meaning, and obligation look like when sovereignty has been fully assumed.

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Conclusion: The Jurisdictional Axis and Its Place in Contemporary Philosophy

The ten comparisons undertaken in this article reveal a complex and productive philosophical landscape. Each of the thinkers examined has developed frameworks, arguments, and conceptual tools that illuminate Omittoism from a different angle, and Omittoism in turn offers resources that supplement, extend, or systematize what these thinkers have contributed.

Several convergent themes emerge across the ten chapters. The first is the independence of legitimacy from power and creation: Simmons, Huemer, Korsgaard, and Omittoism all insist, from different directions, that the mere capacity to create, sustain, or coerce rational agents does not generate authority over those agents. Authority requires additional justification—consent, reflective endorsement, or demonstrable service to the agent's genuine interests. The second is the autonomy of moral evaluation from divine command: Law, Anderson, Wielenberg, Morriston, and (in a sophisticated theistic key) Murphy all recognize that the moral assessment of divine authority requires independent evaluative standards that are not simply constituted by divine will. The third is the importance of public, accessible justification: Law's epistemology, Anderson's democratic theory, and Omittoism's Public Reason Principle all insist that legitimate authority must be transparent and contestable, not merely asserted. The fourth is the robustness of secular moral foundations: Wielenberg, Anderson, Sterba, and Omittoism all demonstrate, in different ways, that the collapse of divine authority does not entail the collapse of moral objectivity.

What Omittoism contributes to this landscape is primarily architectonic: it provides the explicit political philosophical framework that organizes and formalizes the convergent insights of these thinkers into a systematic theory of divine authority's illegitimacy. Where Law identifies the epistemic symmetry problem, Omittoism provides the Foreknowledge Liability Clause. Where Simmons establishes the consent requirement for political obligation, Omittoism extends it cosmically through the Consent Constraint and the analysis of Cosmic Contractual Failure. Where Korsgaard shows that external commands cannot by themselves generate moral authority, Omittoism operationalizes this as Jurisdictional Severance. Where Huemer demonstrates the commonsense wrongness of coercive authority without consent, Omittoism applies the same logic to divine governance through the Cosmic Audit. Where Anderson critiques the hierarchical structure of divine-human relationships from a relational egalitarian perspective, Omittoism provides the Bio-Social Contract as a horizontal alternative. Where Sterba establishes the logical

incompatibility of divine goodness with horrendous evil, Omittoism maintains the jurisdictional critique even in the counterfactual scenario where Sterba's argument fails. Where Wielenberg defends the autonomy of moral facts from divine command, Omittoism constructs the positive ethics on that foundation. And where Morriston identifies the analytic failures of theistic ethics, Omittoism builds the constructive alternative.

The unique philosophical contribution of Omittoism—the jurisdictional axis—is visible most clearly in its relationship to Murphy's sophisticated defense of divine authority. Murphy has anticipated nearly every objection from epistemology, ethics, and political philosophy, and his responses are the most carefully developed in contemporary literature. The engagement with Murphy reveals that Omittoism's Consent Constraint and its analysis of Juridical Cleavage open genuinely novel lines of argument that Murphy's framework has not yet been designed to meet. The recognition that divine judgment presupposes creaturely independence—that the act of moral evaluation concedes the agent's sovereignty—is a structural insight that belongs to political philosophy rather than theology, and that no amount of theological sophistication within the existing paradigm can neutralize without conceding the central Omittoist conclusion.

The Hex-State analysis—the demonstration that human jurisdictional sovereignty is the necessary conclusion across all possible theological scenarios—also represents a distinctive contribution that none of the ten philosophers has developed. Where the existing literature tends to condition its conclusions on particular ontological assumptions (if God exists, or if God is good, or if divine command theory is true), Omittoism achieves ontological invariance: the jurisdictional conclusion is identical whether the metaphysical situation is that of a known divine sovereign, a silent deist God, an empty cosmos, a simulation, an extraterrestrial origin, or a future superintelligence. This invariance is not a weakness but the framework's greatest philosophical strength: it cannot be refuted by any conceivable discovery about the nature of the universe, because it does not depend on any particular claim about that nature.

Finally, the positive vision of Omittoism—the Doctrine of Finitude, Causal Immortality, the culture of Sovereign Solidarity, the ethics of urgency—provides what is missing from most of the critical literature examined here. The ten philosophers have between them produced powerful tools for dismantling unjustified divine authority claims, but relatively few have constructed comprehensive positive frameworks for what human life, ethics, and community look like after

the dismantling is done. Omittoism's most enduring contribution may be precisely this: it takes the jurisdictional critique to its conclusion and then asks what comes next, answering that what comes next is not nihilism or anomie but the deepest form of dignity available to a finite being in an enormous universe—the dignity of self-legislation, of authored meaning, of obligations chosen rather than coerced.

The comparative analysis conducted in this article suggests that Omittoism is not a philosophy that exists in isolation from contemporary academic discourse. It is, rather, a systematic synthesis and extension of insights scattered across political philosophy, moral theory, and philosophy of religion—insights about consent, reflective endorsement, epistemic accountability, moral autonomy, and the conditions of legitimate governance—that have not previously been assembled into a unified jurisdictional framework. The ten philosophers examined here have each contributed essential components to the philosophical architecture that Omittoism completes. Read in light of their work, Omittoism appears not as a radical departure from the tradition of careful analytic philosophy but as its natural—indeed its overdue—extension into the domain of divine authority claims.

Transparency Note: This article is the original intellectual derivation and sole philosophical expression of Shamsaddin Amanov. While generative artificial intelligence (LLM models) was utilized as a technical scaffold for linguistic refinement and structural synthesis, the conceptual architecture, Omittoist arguments, jurisdictional logic, and core philosophical framework remain the exclusive property of the author. Thus, responsibility for every claim, error, and conclusion from this writing rests solely with the author.

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